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Family and gender values in contemporary Europe: The attitudinal gender gap from a cross-national perspective

ABSTRACT

Drawing on data from the International Social Survey Programme 2002 survey 'Family and changing gender roles', this article looks at the diversity in attitudes towards gender relations and family values in contemporary Europe from a gender perspective. Rather than the idea of a one-dimensional move from tradition to modernity that would gradually erase the attitudinal gender gap, the findings corroborate that gender differentiation plays a key role in attitudinal patterns. Furthermore, the attitudinal gender gap is path-specific and varies according to country-specific societal modernisation. Hence, I examine differences in the statements of men and women to portray attitudinal gender gaps on the national level. I follow the idea that wide gender gaps are associated either with women's financial autonomy or with greater societal equality in education and political participation, since they allow for greater female awareness of masculine domination. I also argue that family deinstitutionalisation also correlates with greater attitudinal gender gaps.

KEYWORDS

cross-national comparison
family life
gender gap
gender relations
modernisation
values

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary societies the erosion of the traditional gender order, fostered by the decline of patriarchal authority, the growing empowerment of women and the increased legitimacy of gender equality, is reflected in both legal and institutional changes, in practices and attitudes of social actors, and in family systems (e.g. Therborn 2003). A major consequence of this shift has been the erosion of the 'male breadwinner model', in which men were assumed to provide for the family while women took the major responsibility for housework and childcare (Lewis 1993; 2001; Crompton 2006).[1] However, although women's involvement in public life has increased, there is little doubt – even in institutionally equality-oriented settings – that the feminine conquest of the public sphere has not been matched by the equality of opportunities and rewards or by men's domestic involvement, even if these have steadily increased (Nock 1998; Perista 2002; Torres et al 2004). Moreover, gender differences remain important in employment and other social domains.[2]

Today attitudes have been shown to be more favourable to gender equality than in the past, although egalitarian ideals remain unevenly distributed across and within societies (Inglehart and Norris 2003; Treas and Widmer 2000; Wall 2007; Torres and Brites 2005). Rather than an ideological consensus, men and women often express different beliefs concerning the ideal gender roles. Alongside age or education, several studies have shown that gender inequalities are somehow translated into values and attitudes (e.g. Scott et al 1996; Baxter and Kane 1995).

The existence of gender differences in attitudes towards equality in the division of labour and family life is not, however, a consensual assumption. Some studies argue for precisely the opposite while pointing to the low relevance of gender in interpreting ideological accounts (Hayes et al 2000; Arts and Halman 2004; Georgas et al 2004; Vandecasteele and Billiet 2004). However, several findings point to the resilience of attitudinal gender gaps. According to Inglehart and Norris (2003: 175), within post-industrial societies the contemporary gender gap not only reflects differences in the value orientations of men and women, but also points to the greater liberalism of younger women. Women in the 'older' gender order were more conservative than men, while in the 'modern' gender order women were more liberal. From this perspective, rather than generating consensus towards egalitarian ideals, women's achievements in personal independence – through education, paid work and welfare state support – would change the gender gap in attitudes.

In this article, I examine the gender gap in attitudes towards gender relations in family life, to discover whether across Europe women are indeed more liberal than men. I propose that, along with other major social determinants (such as age, education and religion), gender plays a key role in shaping an individual's attitudes. I anticipate that the attitudinal gender gap will be path-specific: that is, that it will assume different intensities and configurations in different countries. A total of 15 countries were chosen in order to cover different types of societal and gendered modernisation in contemporary Europe: from northern and protestant Europe to southern and Catholic Europe and from older democracies to post-communist societies.[3]

REASSESSING THE ATTITUDINAL GENDER GAP

As far as attitudes to gender roles and family values are concerned, several studies attribute the gender gap to the greater liberalism of women. Scott et al (1996) conducted a cross-national analysis of attitudes towards

1. In the 25 members states of the European Union (EU25) women's employment rates, which have been rising since the 1950s, stood at 56.3 per cent in 2005. Furthermore, 45 per cent of younger-generation couples (aged 20–49) were full time dual earners.
2. The employment rate for men in the EU25 is higher (71.2 per cent in 2005), more women are unemployed than men (9.6 per cent compared to 7.6 per cent in 2006), part-time work is highly feminised (33 per cent of women were working part time compared to seven per cent of men in 2005), and the gender pay gap in 2004 was still 15 per cent.
3. I compare the following European countries: Germany (West and East), the United Kingdom (Great Britain and Northern Ireland), the Republic of Ireland, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, Norway, France, Spain, Portugal, the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia. To respect intra-national specificities, I analysed Great Britain and Northern Ireland separately and, similarly, East and West Germany.

marriage and the family in Britain, the United States, West Germany and Ireland, and found greater contrasts between men and women than across countries. More importantly, the authors suggest that the shift to more liberal views of gender relations accompanies the growth of gender differences in some significant areas, such as the idea that women working outside the home can be harmful to children, which is still more popular among men. In general, in advanced modern societies, and when compared to women, men are less supportive of equal roles (Panatoya and Brayfield 1997). They have been slower to change their values, even though recent findings have documented men's generational change (Thornton 1989), as in Ciabattari's (2001) research in the United States.

A major argument in interpreting these trends concerns a common fact: the rise of women's social and financial independence. The more independent women become, the more they disengage themselves from the dominant masculine gender system, and, consequently, the more their attitudes differ from men's (e.g. Baxter and Kane 1995; Pratto et al 1997): traditionally women tend to be less liberal regarding post-material values and political opinions (Jelen et al 1994; Inglehart and Norris 2003). Inglehart (1977) emphasises that despite the modest impact of gender upon values women were less likely to cherish self-expression values – except in the United States and Scandinavia, where they had already achieved greater financial independence. Hayes et al (2000) replicated similar trends in their study, except where women had feminist attitudes and were therefore more independence-minded. More recently, using the gender-related development index (GDI) to rank different country clusters, Inglehart and Norris (2003) correlated the greater liberalism of women with the level of gender fairness achieved in societies, which resulted in a strong generational change among women living in post-industrial settings.[4]

At present, the classical developmental perspective focusing on economic development is being replaced by a cultural approach that emphasises the conversion of economic growth into a process that promotes an emancipatory world-view. The core thesis of the 'rising tide' contained in Inglehart and Norris (2003) is that the impact of human development is mediated by religious, historical and institutional legacies in each society. The consequences of modernity become more intricate, but attitudes to gender roles continue to develop within major cultural differentiations, corresponding to shifts from traditional to secular-rational values (associated with the shift from agrarian to industrial forms of society), and from survival to self-expression values (which are related to the rise of gender equality and therefore to the change into post-industrial societies).

The linkage between self-expression values and the expansion of gender equality is in fact a vastly theorised idea. The movement towards a deinstitutionalised family (Giddens 1993) has been associated with processes of individualisation, which have low compatibility with traditional gender roles. Advocating for equality would then result from receptiveness to new lifestyles, promoting new forms of social organisation and increased liberalism regarding the family and sexual morality (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002). As a group changing at a rapid pace, women would more vigorously defend egalitarian values.

At the meso-level, attitudes towards gender equality have also been shown to depend on advances related to welfare states, labour markets and family organisation.[5] Therefore, considering that paid work constitutes a key feature of women's independence, researchers often see women's entry

4. The GDI is an indication of the standard of living in a country, developed by the United Nations. It aims to show gender inequalities in life expectancy and education.

5. Individual autonomy is granted by the state and public policies directed at supporting individual choice, and not the family as an institution. This is the side of individualisation that Esping-Andersen (1999) refers to as a 'defamilialisation'.

into the labour force as generating attitudes that are more egalitarian, especially among women (Oppenheimer 1982; Forsberg et al 2000; Korpi 2000). However, although women's work has a transforming effect on family life, its connection with social values has to be re-examined in the light of recent findings. As Panatoya and Brayfield (1997) have argued, among the highly employed women of Hungary, this appeared not to be an important causal relationship, which to a certain extent runs counter to Baxter and Kane's (1995) findings that support the idea the gender gap should be smaller in societies in which women are more dependent on men. Hungarian women work more than women in the United States, but are also more conservative. A similar trend seems to apply in Portugal and Finland (Aboim 2007), where more than half of the women between 15 and 65 have full-time jobs, but favourable attitudes to women's professional independence seem weaker than in actual practice. Full-time paid work seems to have a negative effect on conceptions of motherhood and employment, similar to Panatoya's and Brayfield's findings on the impact of long working hours on Hungarian women's values.

Several causes may lie behind the unexpected association between values and women's employment. One of the main hypotheses suggests that the impact of employment depends on state family policies. In Europe, while the dual breadwinner model has been promoted by the state in the Scandinavian countries and even in France and Portugal, mother-oriented policies have been popular in West Germany, while private responsibility has burdened women with childcare in the United Kingdom (Wall 2008). Comparatively, in some countries the man's role as the breadwinner has undergone fewer changes and masculinity has remained more unchallenged depending on the historical pathways of the male breadwinner model (Lewis 2001; Pfau-Effinger 2004). A major transformation propelled by modernity – concluded by Pfau-Effinger through a socio-historical comparison of Finland, Germany and the Netherlands – was related to the social strength of the urban bourgeoisie that was a determinant for the cultural consolidation of the housewife/male breadwinner contract that endured until the 1950s and changed rapidly from the 1960s onwards. Pfau-Effinger (1999: 62–3) identifies five cultural models in Western Europe. The first is the family economic gender model, which is based on the cooperation of women and men in family businesses. The second is the male breadwinner/female home carer model in which men and women have differentiated roles. The third is the male breadwinner/female part-time carer model that is a modernised version of the previous model. The fourth is the dual breadwinner/state carer model in which both men and women are employed full time and delegate to the state. Finally, there is the dual breadwinner/dual carer model that reflects an equal gender division of public and private responsibilities.

These models delineate specific gender contracts, or gender arrangements, that even today are unequally distributed across Western Europe. For instance, the family economic gender model, which was traditionally important in Finland, still characterises several parts of Greece, Italy and Spain, as well as Portugal. In fact, it is argued that cultural models have an independent effect in explaining societal differences (which include those of gender) where institutional or economic factors are unable to provide a sufficient explanation. Institutional and individual actors operate in these cultural frameworks, which they can simultaneously defy and change, as seems to be the case with women in (some) contemporary Western societies (Duncan and Pfau-Effinger 2000). Therefore, gender contracts are always undergoing transformation due to economic change, state and welfare developments or individual action (Crompton 2001).

The modernisation paths of gender arrangements must therefore bring cultural models into the analysis if one wants to understand why there are such differential developments in women's participation in the labour force and the organisation of family life. Within the growing dual breadwinner contract, Pfau-Effinger identifies three cultural models. The first is the dual breadwinner/state carer model, common in Sweden and in other Scandinavian countries such as Finland, which switched from a family economic model due to the strong role of welfare state policies. Here childcare is primarily thought of as a responsibility of the welfare state, rather than of the family. The second is the dual breadwinner/dual carer model that is replacing the traditional male breadwinner model in Germany and the Netherlands. In this model, childcare is mainly a family responsibility that should be organised around a fair distribution of paid and unpaid work between men and women with the help of a family wage or a state transfer system. The third is the dual breadwinner/'marketised' female care-giver model whereby (as in the United States and the United Kingdom) the family is responsible for organising and paying for childcare in the marketplace. These different cultural models for the gender contract underpin welfare policies concerning gender, as well as the real practices of individuals and their attitudes towards the ideal family or gender roles.

However, from an individual standpoint, which factors contribute the most to explain different and gendered attitudes to gender roles? Why do women and men diverge in their attitudes towards family life and the gender division of labour? The persistence of diversity across and within societies has been attributed to the impact of different factors – social, cultural, religious, labour market constraints, public policies (lack of childcare services, for example), modernisation and social gender achievement, etc. However, explanations of this diversity are far from being consensual, often reflecting different sociological conceptions of individual action. Sometimes modernisation and individualisation are seen as promoting a weakening of the structural constraints and allowing action to become driven by preferences (Hakim 2003). From the perspective of this author, post-industrial societies free individuals from the burden of social and gender inequalities. From this rational-choice point of view, women and men would simply have different preferences regarding family and labour. An opposing view seeks to interpret individual differences concerning gender ideals as part of a system of social inequalities in which gender plays a key part, as a principle of power and identity (e.g. Connell 1996; Bourdieu 1998). Ideologies and attitudes of individual men and women would then reflect the particular premises of an unequal gender order (both cultural and interactional), which interweaves macro-social developments with particular gender systems (such as the family) and individual agency. This second perspective, which explores the linkages between macro-structural constraints and gender ideologies, is also my standpoint in this paper.

Therefore, concerning my main hypothesis of a cross-country attitudinal gender gap, I anticipate that the more liberal attitude of women towards gender and family values will be a common trend across Europe. Even if the findings show country-specific patterns, I propose that gender remains important for interpreting normative accounts of family and gender relations. However, I suggest a second hypothesis, that of path-specific attitudinal gender gaps that may vary according to country profiles, being thus linked to particular gender orders coexisting in contemporary Europe (Pfau-Effinger 2004). At the country level, I examine the extent to which these profiles depend on country-specific societal modernisation. Instead of using aggregated indexes (such as the GDI), I correlate attitudes to a panoply of indicators concerning different

dimensions of gender achievement in education, income and the political participation of women, as well as those related to the deinstitutionalisation of family life. First, I follow the idea that the largest gender gaps are likely to be associated with the social empowerment of women, whether related to financial independence or to political participation, since it allows for a greater awareness of masculine domination (Baxter and Kane 1995). Second, following the theoretical link between individualisation and gender equality, I also expect that more deinstitutionalised forms of family organisation (expressed in higher divorce rates and a greater number of cohabiting couples) will be associated with more negative attitudes towards the male breadwinner ideal, thereby promoting larger normative gaps between men and women.

The article is divided into three sections. First, I determine the 'overall' dimensions of gender and family attitudes through an exploratory factor analysis and show construct equivalence across the 15 European countries selected from the International Social Survey Programme's (ISSP) family and gender relations module carried out in 2002 (ISSP 2002). Second, I cross-analyse the countries to identify national as well as gender differences and examine the impact of gender alongside education and age, political positioning and religious attendance, work-life factors – such as the number of weekly working hours and the level of work/family stress – and family life factors – such as marital status and household composition. Finally, I examine gender gap patterns in order to identify country-specific differentiations.

DATA AND MEASURES

The 2002 ISSP survey sought answers on a large number of topics related to family organisation, the gender division of labour and sexual and family morality, among other issues. The survey took place in 34 countries between 2001 and 2003. National probability samples were used in 13 of the 15 European countries analysed here (Germany [West and East], the United Kingdom [Great Britain and Northern Ireland], the Republic of Ireland, Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, Norway, France, Spain, Portugal, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary), while quota proceedings were used in Slovakia and the Netherlands (Klein and Harkness 2004).[6] My 15-country dataset includes responses from 21,952 people: 10,435 men and 11,520 women.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE: ATTITUDINAL DIMENSIONS

To develop an analytical strategy that may help to identify different attitudinal patterns, I selected items with a connection to attitudes towards the relation between women's employment and motherhood, the woman's social role (from the homemaker to the independent professional), the man's participation in housework and parenting and the marital division of paid work. Beliefs and expectations related to the management of family and work, the primary social role of women and men and the social construction of motherhood are fundamental for understanding attitudes to gender and family life. With respect to family organisation and morality, some key indicators helped to assess the degree of conservatism or liberalism, or, in other words, of individualisation and self-expression. Here I am referring to the acceptance of divorce and cohabitation and to the link between parenthood and marriage (Table 1).

The data analyses were carried out on the 12 attitudinal items included in Table 1, all of which are ordinal variables on the same measurement scale (the five point Likert scale) ranging from one (strongly agree) to five (strongly disagree).

6. To respect intra-national specificities we analysed Great Britain and Northern Ireland separately, as we did with western and eastern Germany.

The direction of some of the variables was changed so that all had the same social meaning, on a scale ranging from one (traditional/conservative attitudes) to five (modern/liberal attitudes). I expected that analyses based on the pooled data set of 21,952 people would reveal four dimensions: one related to the division of labour, one to motherhood issues, one to men's participation in private tasks and one to the deinstitutionalisation of family life. However, although principal components

	Motherhood	Caring man	Deinstitutionalisation of family life	Independent woman
A pre-school child is likely to suffer if the mother has a full-time job	0.690			
A job is all right, but what most women want is a home and children	0.747			
A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family	0.767			
People who have never had children lead empty lives	0.589			
Men ought to do a larger share of household work than they do now		0.897		
Men ought to do a larger share of childcare than they do now		0.904		
People who want to have children should marry			–0.630	
A lone father or mother can raise a child as well as both of them together			0.578	
It's okay if two people live together without marrying			0.738	
Divorce is the best solution for a couple who can't work out their problems			0.565	
The best way for a woman to be independent is through having a job				0.763
Both the husband and the wife should contribute to family income				0.749
% of variance explained	19.18	14.06	13.85	11.66
α=	0.70	0.82	0.54	0.46

Table 1: Principal component analysis on items related to attitudes to family and gender roles in 15 European countries.

analysis and varimax rotations resulted in four factors, only two revealed statistical internal congruence, with the Cronbach's alpha values for the other two being quite low. Thus, I obtained two factors with loadings greater than 0.60: the one we called the motherhood factor (α=0.70), which reveals the tension between women's employment, the negative impact it has on children and the image of women as traditional homemakers; and a second, the 'caring man' factor (α=0.82) that aggregates items related to men's participation in household tasks and childcare.

However, this overall factor structure does not imply that each of the 15 countries has identical structures. The methodology of testing for construct equivalence across countries requires comparisons of the factor structure of each country with the overall structure in order to determine the factorial agreement of national factor structures with the overall factor solution. Tucker's phi was employed as the coefficient of agreement to estimate factor equivalence. Principal component analyses with varimax rotation were then carried out for each of the countries in my data set, but only in 13 of the countries was congruence revealed (Tucker's phi > 0.95). Therefore, it can be stated that factors one and two were equivalent across western Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Poland, France, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, Finland, Hungary and Slovakia. The reasons for excluding the other countries were related to factor structures resulting in five factors (eastern Germany and the Republic of Ireland) and to lack of factor agreement (Tucker's phi < 0.90) (the Czech Republic and Northern Ireland). I carried out the same procedures to measure the comparability of men and women with the overall factor structure, and for both groups the Tucker's phi coefficients were above 0.95.

The final sample included very different gender arrangements, ranging from a strong dual breadwinner culture in Scandinavia (Sweden, Norway and Finland) to a still strong male breadwinner contract in some of the southern European countries. Portugal, where levels of women's employment are significantly higher and state support for a dual earner/dual carer model is on the political agenda, constitutes an exception to this pattern (Wall 2008). Western Germany and Switzerland fall broadly into the movement of transition between traditional male breadwinner and the one-and-a-half earner model, which is strongly based on women's part-time employment (Pfau-Effinger 1999). Great Britain (i.e., England, Scotland and Wales) is also included in the cluster that Lewis (2001) identifies as consisting of strong breadwinner models, although there is a rising culture favourable to women's employment. In contrast, France, which has a tradition of full-time working women, tending towards the adult worker model, shows an increase in women's part-time work during the 1990s. Lewis (1998) has described France as a modified male breadwinner state in which women have benefited from the care and support directed at children. Finally, I also analyse three post-socialist countries (Poland, Hungary and Slovakia).

For cross-national and intra-national analysis, I considered factor one and factor two (Table 1) and constructed two indexes that summarise men's and women's statements, on a scale ranging from one (conservative) to five (liberal).

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

The independent variables constructed for analyses at the individual level reflect my concern over assessing different dimensions of gender relations, and may be grouped into four broad categories. The first category is those variables addressing social coordinates of inequality (such as age, education and my main variable, gender). The second category is family organisation

(e.g. marital status and the presence of children in the household). The third is those variables related to work (current employment, weekly hours of paid work) and family-work stress (difficulty in concentrating at work or fulfilling family responsibilities). Finally, there are those variables that relate to ideological positioning (church attendance and political positioning).[7]

Other sets of variables were tested at the country level. Variables were intended to reflect cross-national differences in education, employment and income, as well as in the political participation of women, thus portraying specific forms of women's empowerment.[8] I also report data on divorce, cohabitation and types of households in Europe. Using these variables simultaneously, I was able to examine several dimensions of gender inequalities, with an eye towards assessing the extent to which they may produce national differences in attitudes and nation-specific gender gaps.

7. See Appendix 1 for the description of the codes of these variables.
8. See Appendix 2.

ANALYTICAL STRATEGY

The analysis proceeds as follows. First, I examine national and gender variations concerning the motherhood and caring man indexes. Bivariate analysis allows an observation of cross-national differences, comparing their statistical significance with the overall gender variance, and an examination of the cross-national variance of the feminine and masculine groups in order to account for gender differences in intra-group diversity. Second, I estimate the impact of gender alongside other social and demographic coordinates by carrying out regression analysis within countries. Third, I analyse the gender gap at the country level. With a pooled dataset of 13 countries, I proceed to a hierarchical cluster analysis of average scores on the two indexes and the average country difference between men and women. I then use non-parametrical Spearman correlation to test the effect of the countries' societal measures of women's empowerment and family deinstitutionalisation.

ATTITUDINAL DIFFERENCES ACROSS CONTEMPORARY EUROPE

The cross-European variation is statistically significant on both dimensions. Overall scores for the 13 countries reveal a steady modernisation trend among Europeans, who position themselves above the middle scale values and are particularly in favour of men's participation in household tasks and childcare (Figure 1). The contemporary portrait of Europe demonstrates the popularity of ideals involving a caring male figure who shares domestic responsibilities within the private sphere. However, variation patterns related to the motherhood dimension point to the persistence of a troubled relation between women's employment and the primary roles assigned to women. Ideals of femininity still place motherhood in the realm of family and gender values, even though they appear to be moderately liberal overall. From the standpoint of ideals, the entry of men into traditional feminine domains gathers more agreement than the opposite movement. Beliefs on the centrality of family roles for women and the negative impact of women's employment on children resist changes in gender relations, and are especially challenging to the decline of the 'male breadwinner model'.

Scores on the motherhood dimension are significantly below average in post-communist countries and in Portugal, where motherhood issues seem to uphold conservative beliefs related to women's roles. To a lesser extent, the Finns seem to share these motherhood-oriented values. In contrast, Sweden,

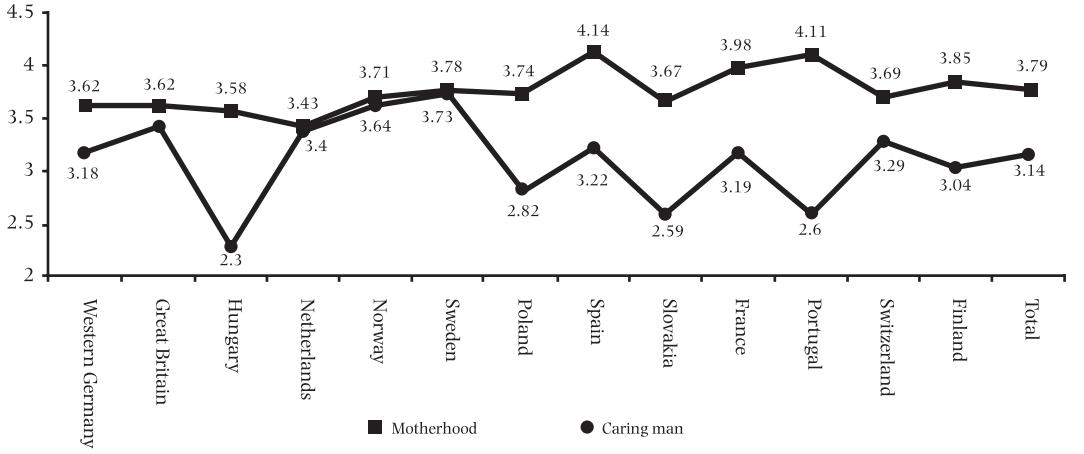

Figure 1: Scores on the motherhood and caring indexes by country (Variance by country: Motherhood index – F *(12.15419) = 294.37;* p *< 0.000, Caring man index –* F *(12.17121) = 106.45;* p *< 0.000).*

Norway, the Netherlands and Great Britain have the highest scores on this dimension, pointing to the acceptance of more liberal views of motherhood.

In fact, rather than settling for a simplistic hierarchical country-by-country classification, this bi-dimensional picture allowed me to paint a clearer attitudinal portrait of national differences, which suggests the need for a more careful reading of the traditional-modern continuum. Even though variations in the motherhood dimension are greater in a cross-country perspective, attitudinal behaviour to the caring man dimension introduces a different perspective into this analysis.

With the exception of Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands and Switzerland, all of the countries have higher scores on the caring man index than on the motherhood dimension. However, the contrast is particularly strong in Portugal, Spain, France and Finland, where attitudes to men's participation in domestic chores and childcare are significantly below average. The Portuguese case shows the greatest mix between conservatism on motherhood beliefs and liberalism to the caring man ideals. Post-communist countries share this contrast to some extent, even though they all are positioned below average on both dimensions.

GENDER DIFFERENCES: TOWARDS DIVERGENT CONCEPTIONS OF MASCULINITY

In this section, I discuss the results from one-way variance analysis corroborating my initial hypothesis. Overall, compared to men women are more modern in the whole range of countries, and variance due to gender differences appears to be high (Table 2). However, gender differences are greater in attitudes towards the caring man index. Gender acquires increased explanatory importance for understanding interpretations of masculinity in private life. In contrast, motherhood and femininity ideals depend more on national settings – whether they be cultural, institutional or socio-economic. The assumption hinted at here will be subject to country-level analysis below.

An immediate conclusion to draw from my data corroborates the view that women are systematically more modern than men (Figures 2 and 3). Therefore, the attitudinal 'gender gap' follows quite similar pathways across countries. A

	Motherhood	Caring man
Men	3.04	3.67
Women	3.23	3.91
Total	3.14	3.79
	$F(1.15419)=172.19$; $p<.000$	$F(1.17121)=393.72$; $p<.000$

Table 2: Overall scores on the motherhood and the caring man indexes by gender.

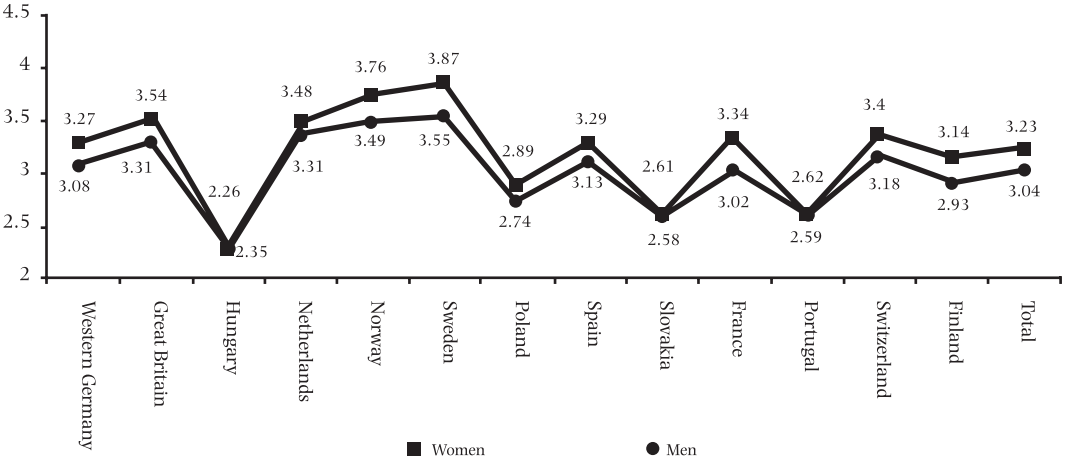

Figure 2: Scores on the motherhood index by country and gender
(Variance by country: Men – F*(12. 7174) = 106.92;* p *< 0.000;* $\eta^2 = 0.15$*, Women –* F*(12. 8247) = 194.79;* p *< 0.000;* $\eta^2 = 0.22$*).*

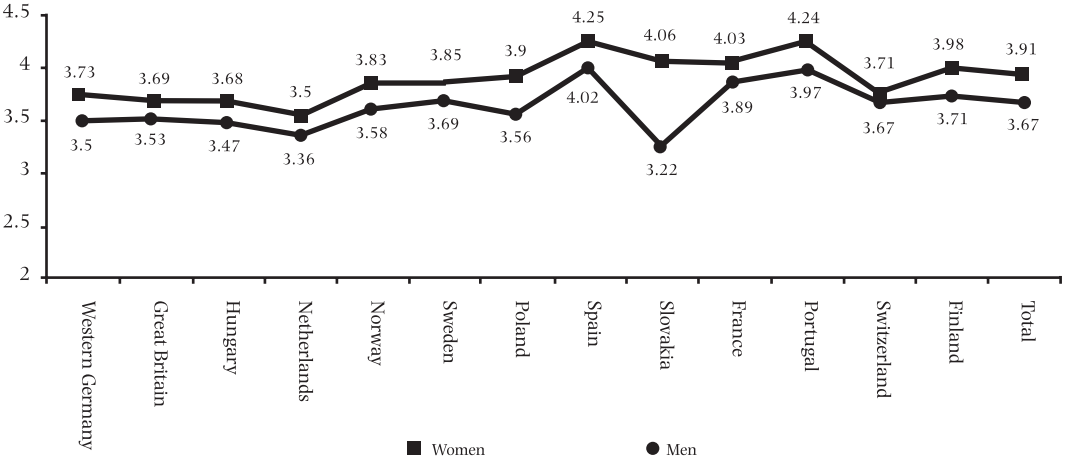

Figure 3: Scores on the caring man index by country and gender
(Variance by country: Men – F*(12. 8101) = 62.28;* p *< 0.000;* $\eta^2 = 0.09$*, Women –* F*(12. 9019) = 66.41;* p *< 0.000;* $\eta^2 = 0.08$*).*

second finding reinforces this gender pattern and points to the wider range of women's positioning along the traditional-modern scale compared to men. While national contexts affect men's statements less, the country-by-country variance is greater among women. However, my findings raise another interesting characteristic of the attitudinal gender gap across Europe. Even if women as an analytical group reveal more internal variance across countries, it is important to state that both men's and women's intra-group divergences somehow revolve around the same issue: the role of women as mothers.

FACTORS INFLUENCING ATTITUDES: THE IMPACT OF GENDER

At this point, the findings hint at the statistical fitness of hypothesising about the persistent attitudinal gender gap across Europe. Let us look at the results from the ordinary least squares linear regression procedures applied to each country's samples, and examine the weight of gender on the predictive model of attitudes towards motherhood and the caring man factors (Tables 3 and 4).[9]

In the caring man index, the regression model has low predictive capacity across the whole range of countries. Nevertheless, gender appears to be one of the most predictive coordinates. Overall, quite similar patterns can be found in most countries: beyond gender, attitudes to the caring man ideals are particularly affected by the presence of children in the household, by stress in conciliating family with work-life (the difficulty in fulfilling family responsibilities) and by political positioning on the left. Age can also be a relevant factor, as in the case in the Netherlands where older people are more in favour of men's domestic involvement, and in France and Spain where younger people have more liberal views on the caring man index. Portugal is the only country in which education is a predictor: the longer a person is in formal education, the more modern their ideas will be. Switzerland, on the other hand, presents a more deviant pattern comparatively, because gender is not at all predictive. Left-wing political positioning is far more important in a country where the stay-at-home mother model is still predominant among couples with children.

Analyses of the motherhood index show that attitudes towards the role of women as mothers are predicted by a larger number of variables, and that regression models have greater predictive power. Once again – except in Portugal and Hungary, where age, education and family life coordinates appear to be more important – gender is one of the strongest predictors. However, despite the overall importance of gender, I should stress the increased strength of age, educational and ideological differences in predicting motherhood-related attitudes. Employment situation is also an important predictor, since – except in Sweden, where education and political ideology are better suited as predictors – the employed generally hold more liberal views than the unemployed. Those on the left and those with higher educational capitals will also be more liberal. Apart from some national traits, motherhood attitudes seem to depend on a larger number of variables, and, to a greater extent, on other forms of social inequality beyond gender. Younger generations, the more educated, the employed and those on the left are more likely to have modern conceptions of women's roles, as the cross-national findings of Inglehart and Norris (2003) show.

NATIONAL GENDER GAPS?

In this part of the analysis, I seek to buttress the hypothesis of a nation-specific gender gap in values, as discussed above. With the goal of classifying the countries according to their similarities, I aggregated the 13 countries and

9. Regression analyses were not carried out for Slovakia, as variables related to the number of children in the household were not available in the ISSP data set.

	Total	Western Germany	Great Britain	Hungary	The Netherlands	Norway	France	Sweden	Poland	Spain	Portugal	Switzerland	Finland
Sex	0.16***	0.21***	0.20***		0.19***	0.24***	0.11***	0.14***	0.16***	0.19***	0.20***	0.17***	0.15***
Age	−0.14***	−0.11**	−0.25***	−0.16***		−0.17***	−0.17***	−0.18***	−0.35***	−0.26***	−0.24***	−0.25***	−0.26***
Number of years in school	0.12***	0.21***	0.07***	0.19***	0.10***	0.25***	0.09***	0.32***	0.09**	0.10***	0.16***		0.09**
Marital status	0.05***			0.08*	0.12***		0.11***	0.07*			0.11***		
Number of children under 5/6 years in the household	0.05***			−0.09**				−0.11***		0.06**	0.11***	−0.08*	
Number of children under 7/17 years in the household	−0.04***		−0.07***	−0.08**			0.06*		−0.11***		−0.15***	−0.09**	
Employment situation	−0.20***	−0.32***	−0.19***	−0.09**	−0.24***	−0.22***	−0.26***		−0.29***	−0.39***	−0.15***		

Continued

Weekly working hours	0.05***								−0.18*	−0.26***			0.15***
Difficulty in concentrating at work	−0.07***											−0.20***	
Difficulty in fulfilling family responsibilities	0.06***					0.09*	0.13***						
Religious attendance	0.04***	0.15***			0.09***	0.16***	0.12***		0.08**	0.08***		0.13***	
Political positioning: left-right	−0.13***		−0.05***		−0.21***	−0.06*	−0.13***		−0.11***	−0.08***		−0.16***	
Adjusted R^2	0.16	0.22	0.17	0.11	0.16	0.22	0.21	0.19	0.23	0.21	0.20	0.18	0.13*
n=	9608	703	1506	893	1045	1077	1144	630	932	1369	614	759	749

*$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$, ***<0.001.

Table 3: OLS linear regressions on the motherhood index, twelve countries (standardised coefficients β).

	Total	Western Germany	Great Britain	Hungary	The Netherlands	Norway	Sweden	Poland	Spain	Portugal	Switzerland	France	Finland
Sex	0.14***	0.18***	0.10***	0.11***	0.11***	0.16**	0.11***	0.24***	0.20***	0.23***		0.09***	0.17***
Age	0.06***		0.10***		0.23***	0.09**			–0.12***			0.16***	
Number of years in school										0.10**			
Marital status	0.06***		0.07**		0.20***						0.09**	0.14***	
Number of children under 5/6 years in the household	0.19***	–0.11***				–0.06*		–0.07**					
Number of children under 7/17 years in the household				–0.12***						–0.10***		0.09***	
Employment situation			0.10**									–0.44***	
Weekly working hours						–0.06*						–0.38***	–0.20***

Continued

Difficulty in concentrating at work	–0.04***												
Difficulty in fulfilling family responsibilities		–0.08***	–0.14***	0.09*	–0.11***						–0.07*		
Religious attendance		0.09**				0.06*			0.09***			0.07**	
Political positioning: left-right	–0.03**	–0.13**			–0.11***		–0.11***				–0.13***		
Adjusted R^2	0.06	0.06	0.03	0.04	0.08	0.04	0.02	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.03	0.05	0.04
n=	10665	804	1568	914	1172	1212	702	1117	1576	633	891	1205	880

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***<0.001.

Table 4: OLS linear regressions on the caring man index, 12 countries (standardised coefficients-β).

	Motherhood index				Caring man index			
	Total	**Men**	**Women**	**Difference M–F**	**Total**	**Men**	**Women**	**Difference M–F**
Western Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Switzerland	3.33	3.22	3.42	–0.21	3.59	3.52	3.66	–0.14
Norway, Sweden and Finland	3.69	3.52	3.82	–0.30	3.75	3.64	3.84	–0.21
Hungary, Poland and Slovakia	2.57	2.56	2.59	–0.03	3.66	3.42	3.88	–0.46
Portugal	2.60	2.59	2.62	–0.03	4.11	3.97	4.24	–0.27
Spain and France	3.15	3.03	3.26	–0.23	3.98	3.87	4.09	–0.21
Total	3.14	3.04	3.23	–0.19	3.79	3.67	3.91	–0.24

Table 5: Ward's hierarchical cluster analysis based on the two indexes, considering men's average, women's average and difference M–F.

carried out a Ward's hierarchical cluster analysis based on the two indexes, considering men's and women's scores separately as well as the average differences between them. This procedure allowed me to divide the countries analysed here into five groups. In effect, I found that the five-cluster solution best fitted in terms of balance between within-cluster homogeneity and clarity in portraying different types of gender arrangements across Europe (Table 5). According to my observations, there are in fact multiple 'gender gaps'.

The first cluster brings together western Germany, Great Britain, Switzerland and the Netherlands, where the male breadwinner arrangement is still strong (Pfau-Effinger 2004), around a narrow attitudinal gender gap pattern. Nevertheless, disagreement between men and women revolves more around the motherhood dimension than the man's role in domestic life. Norway, Sweden and Finland, where the dual earner/dual carer arrangement has been promoted, follow this pattern, but significantly enlarging both the gender gap and the degree of attitudinal liberalism. Scores on the caring man dimension are also higher and slightly more affected by gender differentiation. Another cluster gathers post-communist countries, which are the most conservative. Gender roles and identities fit into a traditional framework, despite the fact that women would appreciate men taking more responsibility for housework and child-care. Here the larger gender gap relates to the caring man dimension. Portugal also presents a specific pattern, for although conservatism in the motherhood dimension is shared, Portuguese men are more strongly in favour of a masculine domestic role than are men in the previous cluster. In the case of Spain and France, my final country-group, the findings point to a double-pattern gender gap, revealing some level of normative divergence on both dimensions.

The gender gap patterns follow a broad distinction: whether disagreement privileges the motherhood or the caring man dimension. Table 6 shows the correlation between attitudes and the country-level variables, and presents two important connections.

The first connection is that higher levels of women's empowerment (in education, political participation and income), as well as increased proportions of divorce, cohabitation, extra-marital births and people living alone, are associated with both greater country liberalism and a larger gender gap on the motherhood dimension. The second connection is that higher national proportions of mothers (with children under 12 years) in full-time paid labour connect with higher scores on the caring man factor and, inversely, lower women's employment, and, interestingly, part-time employed mothers associate with liberalism towards motherhood issues. Furthermore, the more women are in full-time paid work the greater the gender differences in attitudes to the caring man dimension. In sum, while a mother's employment seems to be associated with the approval of men's participation in domestic tasks and childcare, all other factors concerning gender achievements correlate with more liberal views of women and motherhood. How should we interpret these findings?

High levels of 'women's empowerment', indicating fairness in education, income or politics, and modern forms of family organisation seem to uphold liberal beliefs concerning motherhood, and are more important to gender differentiation in attitudes. However, attitudinal consensus towards the caring man ideal is also stronger, and men's domestic involvement is not so enhanced. Interestingly, visions of femininity are less conservative and ideals of a woman-individual more widespread, but without connecting to mothers' full-time employment, which suggests that conceptions of women's independence might not necessarily be linked to a dual-earner family model in the child-rearing phase. Let us recall, for instance, that western Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands are all countries in which mother-oriented policies are combined with mothers' part-time work or staying at home (Blossfeld and Drobnic 2001). However, other forms of emancipation, which are not necessarily connected to financial autonomy, are also important.

In Norway and Sweden the pattern is similar on the subject of motherhood. However, the fact that women are working full time in higher proportions may be linked to a wider gender gap on the caring man dimension. Baxter and Kane (1995) have argued that in countries in which women have more equal opportunities (in achieving autonomy through paid work, for instance) the gender gap tends to be greater because this contributes to women's awareness of inequalities. In less equalitarian countries, the gender gap may be smaller because women share men's dominant point of view.

However, gender relations and attitudes appear to be a bit more complex. Lower levels of gender fairness in education or politics and a more family-oriented organisation of family life (with a greater number of married couples with children, for example) and, generally, more recent processes of modernisation and democratisation, as is the case of post-communist countries, or to a lesser extent of Portugal, do not erase the gender gap. Modern views of femininity may not have been promoted as strongly, but if women are in full-time paid work, they are apparently more likely to highlight men's domestic involvement, thus defying traditional divisions of labour and masculinity. Even if family-oriented values are important and there is a strong concentration on children and motherhood, the ideals of men as companions and involved fathers – the opposite of the traditional absent figure of men as breadwinners – are becoming much more common, for instance in Portugal (Wall et al 2007).

Spearman's rho N=13	Motherhood index				Caring man index			
	Total	Men	Women	Difference M–F	Total	Men	Women	Difference M–F
Years of schooling (women over 14)	0.549*	0.580*	0.555*	–0.538*				
Employment rate of women aged 15–64	0.680**	0.690**	0.702**	–0.611*				
Women 20–49 with children under 12 years in full-time employment	–0.643**	–0.682**	–0.626*		0.514*	0.670**	0.751**	–0.613*
Women 20–49 with children under 12 years in part-time employment	0.808**	0.828**	0.819**	–0.615*			–0.599*	0.660**
Women legislators, senior officials and managers (%)	–0.455*	–0.484*	–0.455*					
Women professional and technical workers (%)	–0.703**	–0.696**	–0.703**	0.569*				–0.718**
Seats in parliament held by women (%)	0.638**	0.691**	0.602*					
Ratio of estimated women's to men's earned income	0.510*	0.470*	0.552*	–0.612*				
Divorce rate								
Births out of marriage	0.456*		0.500*	–0.588*				
Couple with children (% of households)					0.479*	0.564*		
Lone mother (% of households)	–0.609*	–0.624*	–0.618*	0.455*				
Single person (% households)	0.591*	0.601*	0.627*	–0.673*			–0.536*	0.589*
Cohabiting couples (% households)	0.599*	0.575*	0.637**	–0.714**				

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Table 6: Correlations between the attitudinal indexes (total, men, women and the gender gap) and societal variables in the 13 countries.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I have argued that gender plays a key role in shaping attitudes to men's and women's ideal roles and identities within the family. Rather than erasing the gender gap in attitudes and generating consensus on equality, modernisation has contributed to shaping and changing gender differentiation in values. The more liberal view women hold across European societies has been proved to have an impact on the patterns of attitudes towards gender roles and family values. A greater intra-group variation among European women, when compared to men's higher internal homogeneity, also reveals the extent to which women's attitudinal behaviour is important in understanding differences between men and women. However, gender gaps are also moulded by national variations and the ways in which a country's values reflect specific gender regimes in family life. Rather than the idea of a one-dimensional move from tradition to modernity, which would generate attitudinal consensus, my findings have shown a considerable amount of inter-country diversity.

Although exploratory factor analysis and congruence tests have revealed two dimensions well suited to cross-national comparison – the motherhood and the caring man factors – national differences have arisen. Generally, Europeans are fairly modern in their views; however, while the tension between independence and the primary responsibilities of motherhood still troubles the ideal roles of women, the caring male figure who shares domestic responsibilities and childcare has increased in popularity. Femininity is still closely connected to motherhood, and the negative impact of employment on small children is often viewed as affecting women's entitlement to paid work and public life. The decline in traditional conceptions of masculinity and of men as the sole providers is not necessarily linked to the emphasis on women's independence. However, it is interesting that today both women and men are being drawn into the private sphere. Motherhood as a value is at the core of gender ideologies, but ideals of masculinity are also placing men in family life.

At the country level, I showed that the gender gap is path-specific, and identified broad lines of cross-national differentiation. Countries seem to group together according to whether disagreement focuses on the motherhood or the caring man dimension, or both at the same time. Several countries, from the Scandinavian and central European to Great Britain, have more liberal scores on the motherhood dimension, which is also the most affected by gender disagreement. However, quite a few countries enhance men's participation in the private sphere while combining these liberal views with more conservative views concerning motherhood. This is the case of Finland, Spain and France, where gender disagreement is important on both dimensions. Portugal presents the most extreme pattern due to the acute oscillation between the 'traditional mother-woman' and the 'caring man'. However, gender differences relate mainly to the masculine dimension, whereas there is gender consensus towards motherhood. Post-communist countries have a conservative version of this profile, thus revealing a much wider gender gap on the caring man dimension. In this group of countries, men have a much more conservative vision of their own ideal role than women do. In sum, the analysis leads me to stress the close connection between the traditional and the modern, and the binary structure of the attitudinal gender gap that centres on either the feminine or the masculine roles.

The gender gap relating to the motherhood index is linked to certain forms of gender equality and to the deinstitutionalisation of family life, while the gap relating to the caring man dimension depends more strongly on the impact of

women's full-time employment, especially the full-time employment of mothers. These findings bring complexity to the women's independence hypothesis. On the one hand, independence due to full-time employment promotes the questioning of traditional masculinity and of the 'male breadwinner model', while on the other, liberal attitudes towards ideals of womanhood seems to depend more on modernisation and overall gender empowerment. In the end, we may ask what women's independence is about.

One element is the societal level of overall gender fairness; another is financial independence. The former may emerge even in the context of family policies that are more centred on state support for stay-at-home or half-earner mothers and the refusal of the dual breadwinner model. However, the absence of gender equality in employment does not draw men into the private sphere as strongly at the level of attitudes. On the other hand, the idea that equality and modern views of the family and gender relations can simply be anticipated because of the increase in women's employment hardly fits my findings. Women's full-time employment has a powerful effect on the caring man dimension, but, interestingly, fails to promote liberal conceptions of women and motherhood, for which overall modernisation seems necessary. The links among modernisation, changes in employment patterns, gender systems and equality values are quite complex, meaning that it is necessary to examine gender inequalities within each country's historical, economical and socio-cultural particularities.

APPENDICES

Independent variables	Codes	
Sex	1 – men	2 – women
Age	15 – 18	96
Marital status	1 – married/cohabiting	2 – not married
Number of years education	0 – no formal schooling	30 years
Political positioning	1 – left	10 – right
Church attendance	1 – Several times a week	8 – never
Number of children aged under 5/6 years in the household	0	4 or more
Number of children between 6 and 17 years in the household	0	4 or more
Employment status	1 – full-time, 2 – part-time, 3 – < part-time, 4 – not at work	
Weekly working hours	0	96
Difficulty in fulfilling family responsibilities	1 – Several times a week	4 – never/n.a.
Difficulty in concentrating at work	1 – Several times a week	4 – never/n.a.

Appendix 1: Description of codes of variables.

	Years of schooling, (women over 14)[a]	Employment rate of women aged 15–64[b]	Women 20–49 with children under 12 years in full-time employment (%)[c]	Women 20–49 with children under 12 years in part-time employment (%)[c]	Women legislators, senior officials and managers (%)[d]	Women professional and technical workers (%)[d]	Seats in parliament held by women (%)[d]	Ratio of estimated women's to men's earned income[d]	Divorce rate[e]	Births out of marriage (%)[e]	Couple with children (% of households)[f]	Lone mother (% of households)[f]	Single person (% households)[b]	Cohabiting couples (% households)[b]
Germany	9.69	58.9	24.9	35.1	30.5	35	50	0.58	2.60	28.00	26.5	5.0	35.8	0
Great Britain	9.39	65.2	25.6	36.2	18.5	33	46	0.65	2.80	42.30	27.2	8.5	30.2	0
The Netherlands	9.12	66.2	14.9	54.7	34.2	26	48	0.63	1.90	32.50	30.4	4.9	33.6	0
Switzerland	9.92	71.5	12.00	37.0	24.8	27	46	0.61	2.90	10.00	28.8	4.4	36.0	0
Hungary	8.70	49.8	46.6	3.7	10.4	34	61	0.64	2.40	34.00	34.5	9.3	26.2	0
Slovakia	8.63	51.4	57.5	1.6	16.7	32	61	0.58	2.00	24.80	28.7	8.0	19.4	0
Poland	9.66	46.2	49.1	10.1	19.1	34	61	0.59	1.50	17.20	40.8	11.1	24.8	0
Norway	11.56	73.7	44.5	36.5	37.9	29	50	0.75	2.04	49.00	30.7	7.0	37.7	0
Sweden	11.44	72.2	43.0	31.3	45.3	31	51	0.81	2.20	55.40		.	.	23.0
Portugal	5.66	61.4	69.2	7.2	21.3	32	52	0.59	2.20	29.10	45.6	7.4	17.3	23
Spain	7.14	44.4	41.5	9.7	30.5	32	47	0.50	2.10	23.20	43.4	8.0	20.3	46
France	7.63	56.7	48.7	17.6	13.9			0.64	2.10	45.20	32.6	6.8	31.0	10.0
Finland	9.84	66.2	64.2	7.8	37.5	28	54	0.71	2.50	40.80	25.4	6.4	37.3	102

[a]OECD (2002).
[b]European Labour Survey, Eurostat (2002).
[c]Eurostat (2005) – in the case of Norway, data were drawn from the Labour Survey, 2004 (mothers with children under 15)
[d]United Nations HDR (2002).
[e]United Nations (2005).
[f]Eurostat (2001) – In Germany, households include ex-GDR from 1991.

Appendix 2: Country-level indicators.

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